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Conference on the Effective Use of Womanpower*

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Shortage Occupations: New Opportunities for Women

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Summary

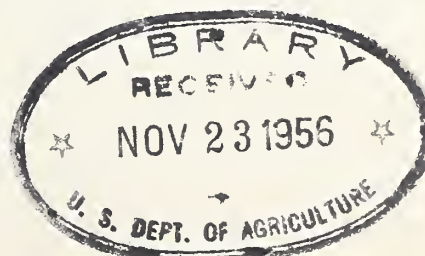
I have been asked to discuss ways in which women can increase their contribution to our economy through the application of new techniques and new knowledge in such traditional professions as teaching and nursing. I will emphasize these two fields because I am more familiar with them than some others, but I am quite confident that some of the points which I will emphasize will be equally applicable to other professions in which women have been, and will continue to be, prominent.

We should begin with the over-all national employment prospects during the coming two decades, 1955-1975. During this period, our population will increase by an estimated 60 million or more, or in other words, our total population will be in excess of 220 million as compared with 163 million today. Births are now exceeding 4 million a year and it is apparent that the number of young people in our society will reach new peaks in the coming two decades. The proportion of the population in the age group over 65 and the proportion under 20 years of age will be much higher, and the proportion of people in the working age group will be much lower during the next decade and most of the following decades.

It is quite apparent therefore that in terms of over-all national needs, if we are to maintain a normal growth of production and improvement in our standard of living over the next two decades, we will have great demand for workers, especially in fields concerned with youth and the aged. The professions in which women have been traditionally effective, such as teaching and nursing, will experience especially heavy demands. The low birth rate of the 1930's accentuates the current general shortage of adequately trained teachers and nurses. This acute shortage also reflects the current tendency toward earlier marriages and higher birth rates which remove many young women of employable age from the traditional professions. Improvement in the

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quality of service and an increase in the amount of service demanded in the major professions, especially in teaching and medical care, also contributes to the current acute shortage which promises to be still more acute in the next 15 to 20 years at least.

Our major problem, therefore, seems to be to determine ways by which we can significantly increase the effectiveness of our womanpower.

Part-time work. One of the most important ways by which we can increase the effectiveness of our womanpower is through part-time work. With the many labor saving devices in modern homes, more leisure time is available for useful occupations. Most women who have had a college education or preparation for a profession, need an intellectual outlet. The current and prospective acute shortages in teaching and nursing point to the desirability of having two or more women fill one vacancy where it is now impossible to find one qualified person to work full time. At our institution, we find, for example, that some of our Health and Physical Education graduates who have been married, have been able to teach their major subject on a part-time basis where schools have not been in a financial position to hire a full-time health and physical education teacher.

The field of physical therapy lends itself particularly well to part-time work. Many patients need treatment, but cannot afford to take time off from their regular jobs. A physical therapist who is available during evening hours, for example, could fill this need.

In hospitals where physical therapy treatments are scheduled at regular times, these treatments could be so arranged that a young married woman could give time during the hours her children were in school. There is a great need at the present time for physical therapists in small and large communities, and there is much evidence to indicate that this need will increase greatly during the next two decades.

Occupational therapy, a rapidly growing field, lends itself well to the same type of arrangement as physical therapy. Both of these fields afford a great deal of personal satisfaction. This is an important aspect of keeping women sufficiently interested in part-time work.

The field of recreation requires many full-time and part-time workers who have specialized interest or training in perhaps just one phase of recreation. It calls for less formal education than many professions so that it is open to many individuals who do not have a college education, but perhaps do have an aptitude for photography, sports, music, drama, camping, folk dancing, square dancing, and similar recreational fields; and an ability for sharing their interests with others. Due to the possibility of utilizing odd hours in the day or the evening, many women should be able to fill needs in these fields.

As leisure time increases with further shortening of the work week, opportunities in these and similar fields will become more evident. These opportunities should make especially effective appeals to the broader interests of modern women.

In several fields, in addition to those mentioned above, part-time work can be an extremely important part of the total labor force. Hospital work is a good example. Industry and business must make special efforts to make adaptations in management and operations if more part-time help is to be used effectively. Bookkeeping, secretarial, drafting, clerical, sales women, and related types of work might be handled in such a way that the older married women could take the afternoon shift and the younger married women with small children, the morning shift, say from 9 to 1. In this manner, the younger women could be home when their children arrived from school and would not begin work until after their children were at school. This two-shift system would not involve insurmountable difficulties to management and would be an effective way of utilizing one of our greatest potential resources, namely, women available only for part-time work.

It should be pointed out that part-time employment of married women would require better time management by the individual woman. In order to assist individuals in achieving better time management, a job analysis type of study on the job of the teacher, nurse, secretary, clerk, or similar occupations should be made. Of course, each individual teacher, nurse, secretary, or clerk must analyze her own job, but someone must help her learn how to do it most efficiently, particularly if she has been out of practice for any considerable time, in the case of the older married woman, or if she is new and inexperienced like the young married mother. Educational institutions need to give more thought to types of short courses as well as regular academic offerings which would assist women in making successful part-time employees and most effective management of their own time in meeting both the requirements of the part-time job and their responsibilities as homemakers. Some of our staff members in educational institutions do not feel that any institution today is doing an outstanding job in this field. A conference or workshop for workers in educational institutions, sponsored by a national agency such as the Women's Bureau of the U. S. Department of Labor, in cooperation with the U. S. Office of Education, with management specialists from industry assisting, might spark this idea and lead to the development of more effective training in educational programs.

Homemakers are our big labor pool. If they are to carry two jobs, they certainly must be more efficient in homemaking. Some ways in which they might get help along this line would include, (1) work simplification studies similar to the time and motion projects carried on in various fields, an example of which is written up in "Every Motion Counts," published by Purdue University in 1944 and prepared by the Home Management Committee on Work Simplification of the National Work Simplification Project at Purdue University. More projects of this type should

be very helpful. (2) The Home Economics Service of the U. S. Office of Education has tried to promote programs of training in home management for employed homemakers. The bulletin, "Homemakers in the Defense Program," published by the U. S. Office of Education in 1952, lists "Implications for Education in Home Economics," and studies such as this should be helpful where there are concentrations of employed homemakers. (3) In the more rural areas, the public schools or the extension service might organize local conferences or workshops in which the women who have already learned how to manage two jobs, or are known in the community to be especially good managers, might help others learn to be better managers and efficient workers.

In some areas and among some groups the feeling seems to persist that there is a high correlation between child delinquency and working mothers. However, there is much evidence that there is more harmony in the home where the young woman is employed in industry or the professions because of actual necessity to supplement the husband's income or the psychological necessity of desiring additional goods and services which the husband's salary or income alone would not procure, or for the psychological or intellectual outlet or release of the woman. In other words, in such instances there is less tension, friction, and discord where the woman works than where she does not. Home economists and educators agree, however, that women with very small children should not work full time, but that part-time work is not only justified, but in many cases, highly desirable.

Much the same conclusions apply in the case of working women and the health and general welfare of the children. The medical profession, nurses, and educators seem to agree that in general women who are frustrated or neurotic, or find it difficult to have interesting activity (which homemaking alone may not provide) for a major part of their 8-hour days or evenings, are much more likely to be associated with situations of child delinquency and neglected, unhealthy children than in cases where women are employed part time or in some cases even full time.

One further point on the part-time employment of women--in many cases, particularly in smaller communities, a prominent position held by the husband may make it especially embarrassing for the wives to be employed remuneratively. Much needs to be done and can be done to develop the proper cultural environment within which it would be considered desirable and proper for the wife of such prominent men to be employed remuneratively.

Applications of new techniques and new knowledge. According to some experts in such professional fields as teaching and nursing, there are no really new techniques nor areas of knowledge, but rather, there is increasing awareness of the real value and significance of developments occurring over the past several years.

Both professions are learning from experience that the use of nurses aides and teacher aides to take care of routine tasks and similar duties not needing a professionally trained and certified person to perform, is releasing the certified teacher and the registered nurses to have more time and energy to perform truly professional level duties. The general public, in recent years, is becoming more aware of the use of nurses aides in hospitals and health centers--both volunteer and paid aides. Teacher aides are now used in some school systems to supervise home-rooms, playgrounds, and study halls. The possibilities of using teacher aides more extensively in these and other areas not fundamentally requiring certified teachers, has wonderful possibilities for making the very limited supply of professionally trained certified teachers go farther in accomplishing the job that needs to be done. Some experienced educators feel that even some "specialists" in the schools need not always be certified teachers, such as in music and drama, where there may be excellent individuals available who could make an even greater contribution in fine arts than the usual certified teacher.

Both the hospitals and the schools can do more to release their professional people for truly professional work by using more clerical help for clerical work. Volunteers from the community to work with after-school groups, such as scouts, Sunday School classes, etc., could relieve the teachers from excessive drain on their time and energy, making it possible for them to be more effective in their professional work. Parents and patrons of schools can help the teacher to be a more effective teacher by themselves furnishing more community leadership.

Some experiments in the use of TV as a technique in presenting either refresher or new course material demonstrate effectiveness in getting ideas and information to large groups quickly. In urban areas, such techniques could be useful in bringing the professionally trained, who have been inactive in their professions for some time, up-to-date so that they could make their contributions soon on their own level of professional preparation.

In nursing especially there is need for well trained, mature women to take administrative posts and to teach student courses. These are areas in which older women not interested in floor duty could render a real service, relieving younger women for the duties requiring more physical stamina and activity.

In the case of teaching, increasing the size of classes so that more students can be taught by one teacher would make more effective use of the limited supply of teachers now available or in prospect. This would mean that more equipment and larger classrooms would be needed. Also, teachers would have to learn new techniques of handling larger classes effectively. Increasing class size would not be practicable in small schools, but a superior teacher might be more effectively used in small schools if she were prepared to teach several subjects,

such as home economics, girls' physical education, biology, and general science. Teaching more subjects would mean more out of class responsibilities and therefore require better time management.

Another adaptation that might be made would be to make use of one teacher for neighboring towns. For example, a home economics teacher might teach in town A in the morning and town B in the afternoon, if the schools were not too far apart. Teaching in two towns, would, of course, double the teacher's community responsibilities.

Some other techniques that might improve the effectiveness of homemakers who would be employed part time, is the use of convenient, labor-saving housing to free women's time for teaching; use of new fabrics (less ironing required); prepared foods and frozen foods (time saving); use of work simplification in home management (time saving), etc. Many women get a sense of accomplishment by the very fine food they prepare. In all techniques and efforts designed to increase the contribution of women, we must be sure we do not interfere with the cultural independence of families.

Incentives to make larger contributions. Of the greatest importance is the incentive to make women want to make a larger contribution to our economy. The piece worker has the incentive of her pay envelope. This incentive does not seem to be sufficient for teachers and many workers in professional fields because in too many cases, the efficient and superior teachers, for example, get no larger salaries than those of the teachers who just get by. Merit salary differentials and a greater spread between beginning and experienced professional workers' salaries might provide helpful incentives to many, but teachers, nurses, and other professional women workers must have the incentive of service or pride in their jobs if they are to be interested in more efficiency for the sake of a larger contribution. Greater recognition on the part of others in the community for the fine services rendered by teachers, nurses, and professional women workers would help. More professional status to teaching and nursing, a sense of worthwhileness of the vocation, more effective recognition of supporting staff--more team recognition to develop effective group feeling and worthwhile achievement; and an effective plan for advancement or increasing responsibility to facilitate personal growth and new learnings, might result in inspiration, enthusiasm, and increasing interest in others.

Conclusion. In achieving the maximum contribution of women to our American economy, research studies pointing out barriers that keep women from the traditional professions, particularly teaching and nursing; job analyses and work simplification studies to improve efficiency, particularly of older professionally inactive workers, as well as new and inexperienced individuals; and community surveys to point up conditions, problems, and opportunities in each specific community, are ways by which we can more effectively apply new techniques and new knowledge and achieve maximum use of our potential womanpower resources.

In terms of education or preparation of women for more effective contributions in the traditional professions, it is felt that the present trend of early marriages is not particularly desirable since many women marry with no professional training or special skills developed and then after marriage and when the children are no longer small, they are unprepared for any type of remunerative work. Every effort should be made to encourage women who do marry young and have families, to get started on their formal education and professional training before their children are fully grown. If the mother starts on such education and preparation when her children start to school, she would be in a much better position to make necessary adjustments later satisfactorily, as well as being a better employment risk when the children are grown than if she were to wait until the children are ready to graduate from high school or college.

